

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 1

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

**Statement of Significance**

**Summary**

The Skyline Drive is significant under Criterion A for the themes of social history and politics and government. The Drive is significant for social history for its association with the New Deal community building program of the 1930s, in which the federal government established nearly 200 resettlement communities for destitute and low-income families. Skyline Drive is significant under Criterion A for politics and government for its association with Depression era make-work projects that employed millions of American men and women in the construction of large public works and intended restore the American economy. Lastly, Skyline Drive is significant under Criterion C for landscape architecture. The Skyline Drive design reflects the high state of landscape architecture attained by the National Park Service in the 1920s and 1930s in the development of scenic and recreational highways, first in the western parks and then in the east.

**Historical Context**

**Skyline Drive**

The origins of the Skyline Drive are traced to the 1924 Report of the Southern Appalachian National Park Committee. Since the majority of the nation's national parks were in the west and not easily accessible by easterners, National Park Service Director Stephen P. Mather<sup>1</sup> wanted to establish a park in the Southern Appalachians. With the increasing use of the automobile, Mather believed a southern Appalachian park would be within a day's travel of the large eastern cities. Early in 1924, Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work responded to Mather's request by asking permission of the Congress

---

<sup>1</sup> Mather was a wealthy New Yorker who became the first Director of the National Park Service in 1909. Mather tried to infuse in his agency the idea that recreation and scenery were valuable commodities in themselves. This point of view distinguished the policies of the Park Service from the more utilitarian US Forest Service. Mather's plea for a major national park in the East indicated his desire to preserve a scenic area which would be accessible to the most populous region of the country.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 2

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

to appoint an unpaid Southern Appalachian National Park Committee (after 1925, it became the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission). Responding to Work's request, Congress appointed a committee of five prominent conservationists: Pennsylvania Congressman Henry W. Temple; industrialist, William C. Gregg; chief engineer of the United States Geological Survey, Colonel Glenn S. Smith; Palisades Interstate Park manager, Major William A. Welch; and botanist Harlan P. Kelsey. The committee's primary tasks were the consideration of park proposals and to visit potential park sites in the Southern Highlands. The group would report its findings to Secretary Work, who would in turn make a final recommendation to Congress.

The federal government was not alone in its efforts to establish a national park in Virginia's northern Blue Ridge. George Freeman Pollock, who operated the Skyland resort on the shoulder of Stony Man Mountain high in the Blue Ridge, became a leading proponent of the national park idea.<sup>2</sup> Many of the regular visitors to Skyland included Justice Department, special criminal prosecutor Harold Allen, and a mutual friend of both Allen and Pollock, George H. Judd, Jr., a part owner of a printing concern. All three men were intrigued by the idea of a national park in the area, and together they filled out a copy of the questionnaire issued by the Southern Appalachian National Park Committee. Next, the men embarked on an all-out campaign to get the Committee to visit Skyland and the area for themselves. Assisting Pollock, Allen, and Judd was L. Ferdinand Zerkel, a Luray, Virginia real estate agent and lumber salesman. By late summer 1924, the four men were working to bring about the creation of a national park in Virginia's northern Blue Ridge Mountains. Zerkel's assistance was especially critical at this point because Pollock and his friends not only had to persuade the Park Committee to locate the proposed park in northern Virginia, they also had to deal with another Virginia group that was promoting a rival site for the park. The second organization, an alliance of businessmen, had adopted the name "Shenandoah Valley, Inc." Zerkel happened to be a member of this organization, so his relationship with both

---

<sup>2</sup> George Freeman Pollock was the only son of a New England importer who had moved to Washington in the 1870s. He first came to the Blue Ridge Mountains in the autumn of 1886, to inspect a tract of more than five thousand acres owned by his father and several business partners. Drawn by the beauty and isolation of the area around Stony Man Mountain, Pollock resolved to establish a cam-  
rustic resort for profit and for the enjoyment of those who shared his love of the outdoors.  
land, Pollock's resort, was founded in 1887.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 3

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

associations was pivotal in assuring cooperation between groups. The cooperation between both organizations resulted in the creation of the Northern Virginia National Park Association for the specific purpose of winning approval of the Park Committee and Congress for a national park in the northern Blue Ridge Mountains. The Park Association began an immediate publicity campaign and in addition to seeking cooperation and support among Virginians, the men also sought publicity from outside the state.<sup>3</sup>

William Gregg was the first member of the Southern Appalachian National Park Committee to visit the proposed northern Virginia park site. Gregg and his wife arrived in Luray, Virginia in October 1924, and stayed at Pollock's Skyland. So impressed with the Skyland area, he made a suggestion to open the beauty of the region to as many people as possible. Thus, Gregg apparently became the first to visualize what would become an integral feature of the Shenandoah National Park, the Skyline Drive.<sup>4</sup> During the next month, three of the four remaining committee members visited the area.<sup>5</sup> The impact of the visits upon the Park Committee is clearly evident in the Congressional Record of December, 1924. Congressman Henry Temple stated that the members of the Park Committee had visited several sites with the idea of finding an area that would meet the needs "as a recreational ground for the people not only of today but of the coming generations. Thus accessibility, scenic beauty, size of area, and the opportunity to preserve it were the committee criteria." According to Temple, the Great Smokey Mountains were "most attractive but were comparatively inaccessible; their development as a park was urged after the Blue Ridge of Virginia, which were within a day's ride of 40,000,000 of our inhabitants."<sup>6</sup> According to Temple, the Blue Ridge area possessed accessibility as well as great natural beauty and historical significance. The most significant passage in his report read:

---

<sup>3</sup> Simmons, "Shenandoah," pp. 11-18.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Major Welch, Colonel Smith and Congressman Henry Temple surveyed the northern Blue Ridge mountains in November, 1924.

<sup>6</sup> Simmons, "Shenandoah," p. 22.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 4

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

The greatest single feature, however, is a possible skyline drive along the mountain top, following a continuous ridge and looking down westerly on the Shenandoah Valley from 2,500 to 3,500 feet below, and also commanding a view of the Piedmont Plain, stretching eastward to the Washington Monument....Few scenic drives in the world could surpass it.<sup>7</sup>

The report included both the idea of a scenic highway, a "skyline drive," and the name "Shenandoah National Park" in this proposal for the first major eastern national park. The efforts of these private groups had helped persuade Congress and President Calvin Coolidge in 1926 to authorize the establishment of the park, as well as Great Smokey Mountains National Park in the same act and Mammoth Cave National Park three days later. The next problem for park supporters was to raise sufficient funds to purchase acreage in the proposed park area. Congress had authorized the Secretary of the Interior to accept title to the land for Shenandoah National Park after it had been purchased through state and private initiative in Virginia. Over the next decade the land was obtained and on December 26, 1935, Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes accepted title to Shenandoah National Park. It was during this period that the idea for a skyline drive was further developed and implemented under the administration of Herbert Hoover.

In the fall of 1929, Horace Albright, Mather's successor as NPS Director, guided newly elected President Herbert Hoover on horseback over the ridges of the mountains in the proposed Shenandoah National Park. President Hoover, surprised by the quality of scenery, agreed to federal aid to build a road if funds could be found. Congressional funding for Skyline Drive came in the form of drought relief for the people of Virginia. In 1930, the United States suffered through a severe drought, and the Blue Ridge Mountains were one of the hardest hit areas in the country. William E. Carson, Chairman of the Virginia State Commission on Development and Conservation and a major advocate of the Park and Drive, asked President Hoover for drought relief funds to employ local inhabitants in building the highway over the ridges of the mountains. Herbert Hoover was no stranger to the area that now encompasses the Skyline Drive and Shenandoah National Park. Previously, in the spring of 1929, Carson knowing

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 5

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

that Hoover was tremendously fond of trout fishing, convinced Hoover to establish his fishing camp, Camp Rapidan (later Camp Hoover), on the upper Rapidan River.<sup>8</sup>

Carson commented to Hoover that a useable road needed to be built, not only to provide convenient and safe access to Camp Rapidan, but also as a connection between Skyland and the President's camp. Carson was also aware of the implications for the future of the park if such a road was built. The President reacted favorably to the idea of the road, emphasizing the benefit of such a road to the "traveling public." Hoover originally gave his blessing to the project in early October 1929, but as the result of the stock market crash the project was temporarily shelved. Although his perspective was changing as the depression intensified, the establishment of the Shenandoah National Park and the road linking Camp Rapidan to the outside world was still on Carson's mind. By the autumn of 1930, he was promoting a plan which would accomplish the twin objective of putting jobless men to work and make the area accessible to the public. Carson proposed to revive the idea of a scenic road that had first been conceived in 1924. As the depression worsened through 1930-31, the project grew in importance as a potential source of employment for the people of the northern Blue Ridge. The severe drought had led to crop failure in the Blue Ridge region and had deprived the local inhabitants of their customary employment of picking apples. Work was urgently needed to relieve the widespread suffering. Hoover subsequently agreed to provide money from drought relief funds to build the road, if Congress approved the measure. United States Senator Carter Glass of Virginia, at the urging of Carson and Albright, introduced a bill which made drought relief funds available for building roads in the national parks. Upon passage of the bill, President Hoover immediately allocated money to build the road from Front Royal to Jarman Gap, nearly the entire length of Shenandoah National Park. This initial allocation of \$1,570,479 was subsequently denied when Hoover issued a general order of economy because of the national financial crisis.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, Chairman Carson continued to pressure Senator Glass and federal authorities until he succeeded in obtaining enough money to build a

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-67, 70.

<sup>9</sup> Lambert, Undying Past, p. 220.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 6

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

thirty-four mile section of road from Thornton Gap to Swift Run Gap. This was an extension of the originally planned twenty-mile segment connecting Skyland and Camp Rapidan. Local newspaper editors urged readers to pressure state and federal authorities to extend the road south to Waynesboro, and north to Front Royal.<sup>10</sup> Thus, after several fits and starts, construction of the Skyline Drive finally began as a make-work project of the Hoover administration. With appropriations made available for use in the national parks by the Emergency Construction Act of 1931, the BPR, acting for the NPS, began the initial work on the Skyline Drive in the summer of 1931.<sup>11</sup>

Later, in the fall of 1932, an additional one million dollars was allocated to extend the road north toward Front Royal and south towards Jarman Gap. However, when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt entered office in March 1933, he issued a general order impounding all government funds. One month later, in April 1933, when Roosevelt visited Camp Hoover, he promised Chairman Carson he would reinstate the funds necessary to build Skyline Drive.<sup>12</sup> To aid in the establishment of the Park, Roosevelt established six Civilian Conservation Corps camps in or near the Park, including the nation's first CCC camp--Camp Number 1, or Camp Roosevelt, located near Luray. These young men provided the manpower to beautify the right-of-way, sod cut and fill areas, clear sites for picnic areas, construct buildings and structures and other such activities. Following the disbandment of the CCC in 1942, the NPS used conscientious objectors to aid in Park maintenance, fire fighting and razing buildings.

Roosevelt reinstated the money for the Skyline Drive under his New Deal legislation, continuing its construction as a joint project of the NPS and the BPR. He intended to use the Skyline Drive as one of his many public works projects established during the depression of the 1930s in order to help turn around a poor economy. Legislative expression for economic recovery was

---

<sup>10</sup> Simmons, "Shenandoah," p. 78.

<sup>11</sup> "Shenandoah National Park Project", Zerkel File, File Folder 13010, SHEN Archives; and Barry Kintosh, The National Parks: Shaping the System (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991), p. 54.

<sup>12</sup> Davidson, "How the Skyline Came to Virginia", Zerkel File, File Folder 13010, SHEN Archives.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 7

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

contained in the National Industrial Recovery Act approved June 16, 1933, which earmarked \$3.3 billion for public works projects. Under Title II Public Works and Construction Projects, part of the appropriated money was dedicated for building and maintaining highways and parkways.

The Skyline Drive was laid out under the guidance of NPS Director Stephen P. Mather and NPS Chief Landscape Architect Thomas Vint, along with Shenandoah National Park resident landscape architect Harvey Benson. In addition, resident engineer William M. Austin and district engineer H.J. Spelman, both of whom worked for the BPR, also assisted in planning the Drive. The greater part of the Public Works Program was done by contract, according to detailed plans and specifications and under landscape and engineering supervision. In some cases work, day-labor forces employed directly by the Government itself handled work along the Drive. In any case, local labor had preference for any construction jobs along the Drive under conditions prescribed by the National Recovery Administration.<sup>13</sup>

### **Building the Skyline Drive**

The building of the Skyline Drive was a significant event in Depression-era America for it represented not only jobs for the local economy, but is also one of the earliest eastern applications of the use of road building techniques and landscaping practices developed in the western National Parks. These western projects included Columbia River Highway, the Yellowstone Grand Loop and the later Going to the Sun Highway in Glacier National Park. While the crest and hollows of the Blue Ridge were previously accessible by the turnpikes and rough mountain roads that crossed the Blue Ridge at the time the park was established, it was Skyline Drive that opened the scenic Blue Ridge to the day visitor.

Before construction could begin, the proposed route was surveyed and flagged. Next, workmen cleared the right-of-way. Despite the desire to limit the amount of cut and fill, hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of earth and rock had to be excavated to prepare the roadbed, a job requiring 134 pieces of

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 8

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

major equipment and eleven blacksmiths to keep everything in good repair.

In order to proceed with construction work in the Central District, a 100-foot right-of-way based on the preliminary road location was obtained by purchase and donation.<sup>14</sup> A limited time was set for use of the allotted funds and both design and construction work had to be expedited. Horizontal curves had to be laid out in plain circular fashion and the required superelevation or banking built into them.

Throughout the construction of the Drive, engineers were careful to select the line where it would best serve its scenic purpose without causing considerable scarring to the mountainside. The NPS and the BPR personnel made certain that the Drive meshed with the land and every effort was made to blend it into the native environment.

Although actual construction of the Drive began in 1931 under the joint supervision of the BPR and the NPS, it was first necessary to acquire the land.

Shenandoah's enabling legislation forbade the use of federal funds to acquire park land, thus the burden was placed on the Commonwealth of Virginia to acquire the land through private donation, direct purchase or through condemnation. While some park land was donated and other tracts were purchased with privately donated money, the Commonwealth acquired most of the park land by condemnation. The Commonwealth initiated condemnation proceedings against the landowners, and an arbitration board determined the market price of the land. After settlement the land was donated it to the federal government.

The NPS, being pressured by humane considerations and a desire to get the park open with as little delay as possible, became directly involved in the relocation process. As early as 1933, federal officials began preparations to have the Department of the Interior take a direct hand in resettling families from the park area.<sup>15</sup> The Federal Subsistence Homesteads Corporation examined potential homestead sites on both sides of the Blue Ridge. An advisory committee of prominent state officials led by Ferdinand Zerkel, who had been

---

<sup>14</sup> Heatwole, Guide to Shenandoah, p. 42. A 100-foot right-of-way was nominal. At some places, e cut and fill areas, it was increased.

<sup>15</sup> Simmons, "Shenandoah," p. 145.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 9

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

serving as assistant to J.R. Lassiter, engineer in charge of the park project, was charged with contacting park inhabitants to explain the opportunities which the government would be making available. Those families who were financially able to leave the park on their own were offered real estate advice. Others were given the opportunity to be resettled in the three homestead communities established on each side of the Blue Ridge. Homesteaders were also to be provided with federal assistance to purchase their tracts of land, which had to be paid back in twenty years at 7-1/4 percent interest. Although there were definite problems to overcome in the resettlement program, an attempt was made to avoid the type of delays experienced at the Great Smokey Mountains National Park.

Because of the problems the NPS experienced in evicting the residents of the Great Smokey Mountains, they insisted that all inhabitants of the park lands, whether landowners, tenants, or squatters, would have to leave before the federal government would accept title to the park. The only variances would be in "exceptionally meritorious cases recommended by the state authorities and involving tracts not in the pathway of immediate improvements."<sup>16</sup> The aged and sick would also receive special consideration. In all, approximately 500 families were displaced. According to the NPS, a few of the families living within the confines of the proposed park were legitimate landowners, but most were tenants and squatters. Nearly half of these people were impoverished and isolated and had nowhere to go when the NPS notified them that they had to leave. The policy adopted by the NPS brought into focus a sharp conflict which led to animosities between federal officials and local public which continued long after the establishment of the park.

The Central District, a 33.9-mile stretch between Thornton Gap and Swift Run Gap was first portion of Skyline Drive to be completed. Part of the section between Thornton Gap and Hawksbill Gap was opened to public use in October 1932. It was not until September 15, 1934, that the entire central section of the Drive was opened to the public.<sup>17</sup>

By 1934, with work on the Drive progressing at a steady pace, the BPR

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 123.

<sup>17</sup> Heatwole, Guide to Shenandoah, p. 42.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 10

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

awarded additional contracts to "spiralize" all horizontal curves and to provide bituminous surfacing. Following the opening of the Central District in September 1934, construction on the North District culminated when it opened to the public on October 1, 1936. The South District opened on August 29, 1939.<sup>18</sup>

BPR contractors had completed all but the hard surfacing of the North District at the time of Shenandoah's dedication by President Roosevelt on July 3, 1936.<sup>19</sup> The Drive was opened to travel for the dedication, then closed until November of 1936 when the final surfacing was completed.<sup>20</sup>

The BPR contracted the Drive's construction to private contracting concerns, who in turn hired local workers. While the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was mostly involved in establishing Shenandoah National Park, enrollees aided in building the Skyline Drive. CCC work forces were responsible for clearing and grubbing wayside and picnic areas, resodding and rounding banks, and engaged in retaining wall construction along the Drive's right-of-way.

The NPS and the BPR designed the Skyline Drive to be a recreational road and travel on it was meant to be pleasurable. At numerous places along the Drive road widenings and parking overlooks were constructed to give the motorist an opportunity to park and enjoy the full surrounding panorama. Initially sixty-five parking overlooks were built at various strategic points along the Drive, with a total parking capacity of 1,800 cars.

Also, campgrounds and picnic areas were built at convenient intervals along the Drive, allowing visitors to interact with the natural surroundings of Shenandoah National Park and not merely drive through it. In addition, "waysides" with coffee shops, service stations, and rest rooms were established. Occasionally, there were parking areas that serve as trailheads from which foot trails led to nearby vantage points, often to otherwise inaccessible views across to distant mountains.

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 42.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> Benson, Skyline Drive, p. 3.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 11

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

More than four thousand laborers worked to build the Skyline Drive.<sup>21</sup> The following table shows the approximate initial building costs of the road as a complete unit exclusive of subsequent maintenance work.

	North District (32 miles)	Central District (34 miles)	South District (31 miles)
Construction	\$1,088,376	\$1,212,826	\$1,277,345
Road Surface	102,326	87,357	99,183
Guard Walls	46,346	97,073	160,000*
Engineering	98,129	173,223	130,000*
Totals	\$1,335,177	\$1,570,479	\$1,666,528

\*estimated

On the original 97 miles, the estimated average cost per mile is approximately \$47,000. The guardwalls, of native stone construction, averaged about one dollar per running foot.<sup>22</sup>

### History Since 1939

Since its opening in 1939, the Skyline Drive has been one of the most heavily traveled recreational roads in the nation with approximately 90 million people having utilized it. During World War II, traffic on the road fell off due to gasoline rationing, but after the war traffic patterns began to increase and steadily rose from a low of 42,084 cars in 1943 to a high of 3,055,000 visitors in 1977.<sup>23</sup> On the average, two million people visit the Shenandoah National Park yearly.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Davidson, "The Skyline Drive and How it Came to Virginia" Zerkel File Folder 13010, SHEN hives.

<sup>22</sup> Benson, "The Skyline Drive," pp. 7-9.

<sup>23</sup> Statistics provided by Shenandoah National Park Maintenance Personnel during the summer 1992 ld work.

<sup>24</sup> NPS, DSC, SHEN GMP/EA, p. 2.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 12

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

Since Skyline Drive's completion in 1939, there have been limited physical changes to it, mostly part routine roadway maintenance and thus its original recreational intent and character has remained intact. The most substantive changes have been the 0.4-mile realignment of the Drive north of Big Meadows and the rehabilitation of the stone guardwalls and culverts. By and large, the alignment is mostly true to the original construction. In 1961 an 8.7-mile portion of the Blue Ridge Parkway, between Jarman Gap and Rockfish Gap, was added to the initial 96.8 miles to make the Skyline Drive 105.5 miles in total length. This addition to the Skyline Drive was an administrative change, not a physical change, as this segment was constructed in 1936-37.

The view from the Drive has continuously evolved since 1939. The land once was under cultivation and in a poor state, has been reclaimed by forest. Through native plantings and forest management by the NPS, the land surrounding the Drive has returned to a climax forest. It is important to note that even though the landscape has constantly changed and evolved since the initial construction of the Drive, very few changes have been made to the actual alignment of the roadway.

Beginning in 1983, major rehabilitation of the Skyline Drive was initiated by the Federal Lands Highway Program (FLHP). The work included the replacement of unsafe original guardwalls and failed culverts. The FLHP replacement guardwalls and culverts are sympathetic to the design of the original guardwalls and culverts. The estimated cost of rehabilitation was more than \$326,000 a mile.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Carolyn and Jack Reeder, Shenandoah Secrets: The Story of the Park's Hidden Past (Washington: The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, 1991), p. 33.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 13

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

### **Significance**

#### **Landscape Architecture**

Skyline Drive is significant under Criterion C for landscape architecture. Skyline Drive's design embodies the principles and traditions of naturalistic landscape architecture as exhibited in the parkway movement of the early twentieth century; and is representative of the type of scenic and recreational road developed by the National Park Service in the eastern United States in the 1920s and 1930s.

When President Woodrow Wilson signed the legislation creating the National Park Service in August 1916, the NPS became the stewards of two reservations, 14 national parks and 21 national monuments and their conservation and protection.<sup>26</sup> The origins of the NPS are found in the conservation movement that began in the early nineteenth century. The notion that America's natural resources were not boundless and should be conserved was first articulated by Henry David Thoreau and Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., and later by John Wesley Powell and John Muir.<sup>27</sup> The first national realization of the concept of conservation was the 1832 creation of the Hot Springs Reservation in Arkansas, that set protected the mineral springs from development because of their medicinal qualities. The national park concept was partially realized in 1864, when Congress granted Yosemite Valley to California to be preserved for "public use, resort and recreation." Later in 1872, Congress created the first national park by setting aside the Yellowstone region in Wyoming, Montana and Idaho for preservation. By the 1890s, Congress began to protect cave dwellings, pueblo ruins and other prehistoric areas by designating them national monuments.<sup>28</sup> Conservation efforts blossomed as an organized and political movement during the Progressive Era. Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the National Forest Service, believed that a national policy addressing conservation was needed. To this end, Pinchot and President

---

<sup>26</sup> MacKintosh, The National Parks, pp. 18-19.

<sup>27</sup> Douglas H. Strong, The Conservationists (Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1), pp. 10-11.

<sup>28</sup> Mackintosh, The National Parks, pp. 10-15.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 14

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

Theodore Roosevelt greatly expanded the national forest system and created a multiple-use land management program. This land use policy was based on the idea that the conservation of natural resources should be "for the benefit of the many, and not merely for the profit of a few" and could balance both the conservation and exploitation of natural resources.<sup>29</sup>

Prior to the creation of the NPS in 1916, there was no unified management plan for nation's parks and monuments and often were under siege from commercial interests. Earlier efforts to create a national parks agency within the Department of the Interior had failed. Pressure from the National Forest Service, who stood lose land by the creation of new parks, had derailed all previous attempts. Then, Stephen P. Mather, a wealthy businessman and an ardent conservationist, came to Washington in 1915, as an assistant to the Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane. Mather had complained to Lane about the Department of the Interior's mismanagement of the nation's parks. Lane challenged Mather to remedy these problems. Mather believed National Forest Service's land management practices were too utilitarian. Mather thought that the landscape and natural resources could be conserved, while maintaining their recreational use. In his first year, Mather made Congress and the public aware of the needs of the national parks and gathered a ground swell of support. Having gained congressional support, Mather and his assistant Horace Albright drafted legislation that created the NPS.<sup>30</sup>

Following the enactment this legislation, Mather and Albright developed the principles that would guide this new agency. The Secretary Lane issued the 1918 Statement of Policy that fixed these principles as the NPS's mission. Included in the Statement was the policy of landscape preservation and harmonization, which became one of the basic precepts of park design and development. Beginning in 1918, the landscape engineer and architect would be directly involved in park planning. Thus by 1942, NPS landscape architects and engineers had developed a cohesive style of landscape design that fulfilled the demands for national park development, while at the same time preserving the natural qualities of the parks. This "cohesive style" dictated that all future

---

<sup>29</sup> Strong, Conservationists, pp. 80-81.

<sup>30</sup> Mackintosh, The National Parks, pp. 18-19.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 15

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

developments in the national parks be restricted to "natural construction."<sup>31</sup> The landscape architects application of the landscape preservation and harmonization policy is based in the earlier naturalistic landscape movement and is manifested in the parkway movement.

Naturalistic landscape architectural design is rooted in the nineteenth century English gardening tradition, which was popularized in the United States by the writings of Alexander Jackson Downing and through the development of urban parks by Frederick Law Olmsted and other landscape architects. The principles of naturalistic or informal landscape design were adopted as the fundamental means for blending construction with the natural setting. These principles included the preservation of existing landforms and vegetation, the selection and framing of vistas, the screening of obtrusive elements, the planting of native species, and the use of local native materials and traditional or pioneering methods in constructing structural elements. These design tenets were carried over into the twentieth century on a large scale with the design of municipal parks, gardens, and parkway systems in metropolitan areas of the United States and began to combine with an increasing interest in the native vegetation of the United States.<sup>32</sup>

The use of native plantings in landscape design dates to the 1880s, when Olmsted and others recognized the aesthetic quality of native materials as a design element. By 1918, when the Statement of Policy was issued, the use of native vegetation was a firmly established landscape practice and became part of the landscape preservation and harmonization policy.<sup>33</sup>

Prior to 1918, automobiles were banned from national parks and many parks lacked adequate roadway infrastructures to support the growing number of vehicles in the parks. This new direction for the NPS was a direct response to the rising demands of an increasingly mobile urban population with increased

---

<sup>31</sup> Linda Flint McClelland, Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916 to 1942, (Washington, DC: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1993), pp. 1-2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, pp. 1-2.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 16

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

leisure time associated with a shorter working week. Beginning in 1924, Congress began granting appropriations annually for the development of roads and trails in national parks. This was further strengthened when a cooperative agreement between the BPR and the NPS in 1926 began a relationship whereby park designers were responsible for setting aesthetic standards of workmanship, location, and design of roads. Concerned with landscape preservation and harmonization, landscape architects called for practices of clearing, blasting, cut and fill, rounding and flattening slopes, bank-blending, and planting that minimized the impact on the environment. NPS landscape architects called for methods of construction that blended the roads and overlooks with the adjoining landscape by the use of a "rustic" style of architecture and by a naturalistic approach to landscape design.<sup>34</sup> Like the influence of naturalistic gardening on NPS design, their parkway and park road designs were influenced by the parkway movement.

The origins of parkway development are traced to landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who in 1870 coined the term "parkway" to be used to denote roadways that were simply wider and more richly furnished than ordinary streets. Olmsted and Calvert Vaux introduced the idea of wide boulevards to connect city parks and open spaces in their proposals for Prospect Park in Brooklyn. In their "Preliminary Report to the Commissioners for Laying Out a Park in Brooklyn, New York" the two men suggested the creation of a "shaded pleasure drive" running from the park to the ocean and the East River. In the same year Olmsted designed a boulevard in Brooklyn which he termed the Jamaica Parkway (now Eastern Parkway). In 1870 Olmsted and Vaux also proposed parkways for two other cities, Buffalo and Chicago. In addition, the parkway concept was adopted by other designers in other cities, for example by H.W.S. Cleveland in Minneapolis. The early parkways were broad tree-lined streets leading to parks and they could be straight and formal, or winding and picturesque, depending on the amount of space available.<sup>35</sup> On the whole these early "parkways" could be more accurately described as boulevards, but nonetheless, the movement had begun.

The rapid growth of the automobile in the twentieth century transformed

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Firth, "Blue Ridge Parkway," pp. 2-3.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 17

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

the American economy, society, and environment. The automobile not only made whole expanses of open country accessible, but introduced new requirements in the design of roadways and the treatment of adjacent landscapes. Automobiles traveled at speeds greater than a few miles per hour and provided a new visual experience. The view ahead of the vehicle became of greater importance than the view to the side, and high speeds required landscape design at a new scale.

Some of the first roads built for motor travel were sponsored by racing enthusiasts. On Long Island, New York, in 1908, a private corporation headed by W.K. Vanderbilt constructed the first "motor parkway." This was a two-lane toll road running a distance of 48 miles.<sup>36</sup>

The completion of New York's Bronx River Parkway following World War I marked the beginning of the modern parkway era and this new era has a clear set of distinguishing characteristics. This was the first parkway designed for automobiles and built with public funds. The term "parkway" was now meant to denote a strip of land dedicated to recreation and the movement of passenger automobiles. Also, the parkway was not itself a road; it was supposed to contain a "roadway." The parkway also was to differ markedly from that of an ordinary highway in that it was meant for comfortable driving in pleasant surroundings, not merely for getting from one place to another. With these characteristics in mind, the parkway movement began in earnest. Completed in 1923, the Bronx River Parkway, is generally regarded as the first "true" parkway in the United States. It runs from New York's Zoological Park and Botanic Garden in Bronx Park to Kensico Dam at the southern limit of the city's water supply system in Westchester County. The idea for this parkway was conceived in 1904 during a public campaign which was aimed at cleaning up the Bronx River to protect the Zoological Park and Botanic Garden. Designed by landscape architect Hermann Merkel and built under the direction of engineer Jay Downer and landscape construction supervisor Gilmore Clarke, the construction of the Bronx River Parkway produced important innovations in road design. The parkway road had four ten-foot wide lanes of concrete. In addition, it had a curvilinear alignment following the river, which was designed to allow speeds of 35 miles per hour.<sup>37</sup> The most important feature was the limited access to the road. The roadway was separated from adjacent

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, pp. 4-5.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 18

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

properties by park land and intersecting roads were carried over the parkway on bridges. The success of the Bronx River Parkway led to the establishment of several new parkways between 1923 and 1933. Enthusiasm for parkways led to the establishment of the Westchester County Park Commission in New York in 1922. The Commission had the authority to acquire lands for parks and parkways. Over the next ten years the Commission built over a dozen parks and a system of interconnecting parkways. By 1933 the Saw Mill River, Briarcliff-Peekskill, and the Cross County Parkways were all opened in Westchester County.<sup>38</sup> The Westchester system strongly influenced the design of all subsequent parkways.

Within the NPS, the Westchester county influence was strong. In the winter of 1930-31, NPS exchanged staff with Westchester County personnel. Landscape architects John Wosky and Kenneth McCarter spent several months studying the county's methods of highway design. Furthermore, Gilmore Clarke, who as early as 1929 began consulting with the NPS on parkway projects. Clarke influenced the design of subsequent NPS parkways and scenic highways.<sup>39</sup>

The Westchester design influence is noticeable in the Washington DC system of parkways. Between 1929 and 1932 the NPS and the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) built the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway along the Potomac River in Virginia. The Mount Vernon Memorial Parkway had been commissioned in 1928 and was built in some haste to be opened in time for the 200th anniversary of the birth of George Washington. Incorporated into the George Washington Memorial Parkway project in 1930, the route of the parkway is 14.6 miles long and extends from the entrance to Mount Vernon to the Arlington Memorial Bridge. Parkways were the first recreational areas to be incorporated into the National Park system.<sup>40</sup>

By 1927-28, the NPS had established specifications for the design of bridges, guardrails, and buildings. These specifications drew on the

---

<sup>38</sup> Norman T. Newton, Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 605.

<sup>39</sup> McClelland, Presenting Nature, pp. 134-35.

<sup>40</sup> Firth, "Blue Ridge Parkway," p. 10; and Mackintosh, The National Parks, pp. 52-55; and McClelland, Presenting Nature, pp. 134-35.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 19

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

naturalistic principles and tried to blend the structure into its environment, utilizing native materials, and new construction techniques. The NPS developed and implemented much of this new approach in the construction of roads in western parks. The Columbia River Highway and the Yellowstone Grand Loop are representative of recreational roads constructed in the 1920s. From these experiences, NPS Chief Landscape Architect Thomas Vint and Gilmore Clarke came to develop in mid-1920s general development plans which covered all aspects of a park development from road and trail plans to layouts for developed areas including buildings and structures. By 1933, these plans had evolved into the six-year "master plan" where park improvement projects were systematically phased in over a six year period. During the Depression, park planners revised the master plans yearly, to use New Deal funding of public works.<sup>41</sup>

In Skyline Drive's design one finds all of the elements of the naturalistic landscaping tradition tempered by the influences of the parkway movement. The Skyline Drive's roadway was designed for pleasure-driving at reasonable speeds and for moderate traffic. It is in no sense an expressway, and access is fully controlled. The roadway is a simple ribbon of pavement without a central divider. The landscape architecture of the Skyline Drive is closely fitted to the land and every effort was made to blend into the native surroundings. Using the master plan program, Thomas Vint, and Arno Cammerer, Horace Albright's successor as director of the NPS, assured that vegetation was selectively thinned, transplanted, cleared, or reintroduced to create the illusion of a natural scene, to open up vistas, to screen facilities, and to blend construction with the wooded setting of Shenandoah National Park.

While pockets of forest remained along the right-of-way of the Drive, mostly in the South District, much of the old growth forest had been either cleared for grazing or had been destroyed by the chestnut blight that swept through the area in the 1920s. In order to restore the landscape surrounding the Skyline Drive, the designers drawing on the garden tradition used only native tree and shrub plantings, and with restraint so that the roadside landscaping did not appear artificial or as a vegetative afterthought. By using indigenous materials the Drive's designer were able to knit the many parts of the road into one cohesive unit. Native trees and shrubs were placed to look as if they had just grown there. Where stone walls were required

---

<sup>41</sup> McClelland, Presenting Nature, pp. 177-78.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 20

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

indigenous materials were adopted.

### **Social History**

Skyline Drive is significant under Criterion A for social history. The construction of the Drive and the establishment of the Park forced the displacement of several hundred Blue Ridge inhabitants. Believing they were offering the mountain families a better life, the federal government established seven resettlement homestead communities and resettled them as part of a New Deal social reform experiment.

The National Park Service in mid-1930s, in the opening of the Great Smokey Mountains National Park had numerous problems with former residents still living in the park. NPS had not removed all the inhabitants and many residents refused to leave. This led to a protracted problem for the NPS at Great Smokey. On February 1, 1934, NPS Director Arno Cammerer, in an attempt to eliminate the type of problems experienced at Great Smokey, announced that before the federal government would accept title to Shenandoah National Park lands, all those persons residing there, including landowners, tenants, or squatters, had to move. Only the elderly, who were allowed to live out their lives; or in special cases inhabitants who were not in the way of immediate improvements, would be allowed to stay, but only temporarily.<sup>42</sup>

In a comprehensive census, enumerated by L. Ferdinand Zerkel, a leading proponent of Shenandoah, determined 465 families lived within the political boundaries of the Park. Most of those families affected were squatters and tenants and did not have clear title to the land. Indeed, of the 1,088 Park land tracts, 891 were owned by non-indigenous corporations or by people residing outside of Shenandoah. Only seven percent of these landowners actually lived within the confines of the Park. Nearly one-half of the residents when notified were willing to move, but the remainder were too destitute or impoverished to relocate on their own. Despite objections to this policy by William Carson and others, Cammerer cited as precedent the ongoing trouble federal officials were having in opening Great Smokey Mountains

---

<sup>42</sup> Simmons, "Shenandoah," pp. 122-23.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 21

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

National Park, for his policy for total removal of Shenandoah's inhabitants.<sup>43</sup>

Modern American society perpetuated a myth that the Blue Ridge inhabitants were backwards and impoverished, yet ruggedly independent. This was only partially true. Some were tenant farmers, but many were squatter descendants of the earliest European settlers. Many residents were illiterate and their culture was isolated, uninfluenced by modern society. It was reported that some of these residents spoke in an Elizabethan dialect and many did not recognize the American flag. They lived on land owned by absentee owners, who did not object the residents living there and eking out an existence.<sup>44</sup> It was entirely true that the mountain economy had suffered from the depletion of the natural resources such as tanbark, and from the chestnut blight that destroyed the chestnut cash crop. The severe 1930 drought further complicated matters by destroying the apple crop and the need for itinerant apple pickers, the traditional fall occupation of the Blue Ridge mountaineers.

Farming, labor, and moonshining were the leading sources of income for these families. Thus when the NPS decided to remove the Blue Ridge residents it was for their best. Homesteading offered a better life for the mountain families, both economically and physically. This was to be "a new era for the mountain people."<sup>45</sup> Funding for resettlement came from a New Deal community-building program.

The New Deal era was a period of institutional change with many political, economic and social reforms being initiated. One attempt at social reform was the resettlement of economically and agriculturally stranded families and communities. The Division of Subsistence Homesteads and the later Resettlement Administration were established to place rural families, tenants, sharecroppers, and migratory workers on homesteads and make them self supporting through farming and other employment. The Resettlement Administration also offered loans and grants and resettlement projects for low-

---

<sup>43</sup> State Administrative Project, "Shenandoah National Park Evacuation and Subsistence Homesteads Survey," File Folder 13007, SHEN; and Lambert, Undying Past, p. 241.

<sup>44</sup> H.K. Hinde, The Shenandoah National Park Travelogue (Strasburg, Va.: Shenandoah Publishing Co., 1937), p. 24.

<sup>45</sup> "Shenandoah National Park Evacuation and Subsistence Homesteads Survey."

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 22

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

incomes families. Resettlement projects took the form of community-building. At the heart of the New Deal community-building program was a social obligation to improve the living conditions of destitute and low-income American families.<sup>46</sup> For example, the Division of Subsistence Homestead resettled families from Scotts Run, a northern West Virginia coal camp, to Arthurdale, West Virginia. In 1935, the federal government funded the construction of 165 units with a community center, church, and established a factory. Scotts Run families were offered low interest loans and employed in cooperative or community industries. Other New Deal communities, like farm villages, were established to resettle midwest families effected by the Great Dust Bowl, or as garden cities small urban communities set in a rural setting, like Greenbelt, Maryland. By the end of homesteading, nearly 200 New Deal communities had been established.<sup>47</sup> Unique, among all of the New Deal communities are the Shenandoah Homesteads, because it was the only resettlement communities created for people removed from a national park.

President Franklin Delano and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, along with Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes decided jointly that the Park inhabitants merited removal to the Shenandoah Homesteads. Relocation authorities determined some 293 families to be eligible for resettlement, with 104 of these families to be resettled by the Virginia state welfare system. Another 68 were expected to relocate on their own or were allowed to live out their lives in their old homes. The remaining 121 families were eligible to be relocated in new communities.<sup>48</sup>

The Federal Subsistence Homestead Corporation, the agency formed to distribute funding plans called for the acquisition of approximately 2,900 acres of tillable land with additional acreage for woodlots. Two hundred 10-

---

<sup>46</sup> Paul K. Conkin, Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1959), pp. 6-7, 332-37; and Stanley W. Brown and Virgil E. Baugh, Preliminary Inventory Record Group 118: Records of the Farmers Home Administration (Washington, DC: General Services Administration, National Archives, 1959), p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Bryan Ward, Arthurdale Heritage, Inc. historian, telephone conversation with Lee R. Maddex, September 1994.

<sup>48</sup> Lambert, Undying Past, p. 242.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 23

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

acre homesteads and 140 six and one-half acre homesteads were to be build. Homesteaders were to be employed in the Park, through fruit picking and production and handicrafts.<sup>49</sup>

In September 1934, the Department of the Interior's Division of Subsistence Homestead purchased 343 acres of land near Ida, west of Hawksbill Mountain. The subsistence homesteads were to consist of about 15 acres with a dwelling, garden, field, pasture, and woodlot. The division laid out twenty-eight farmsteads, but it was discovered that they could only legally supply homes to persons resettled from urban areas, and the work at Ida stopped. Within six months the Resettlement Administration resurrected the relocation program, and additional homestead communities were planned. Yet, by the end of 1935 no families had been resettled. There were many planning problems, particularly fitting the homestead to the mountain family, and more importantly, determining how many homesteads to construct. Some of the 121 eligible families moved on their own accord, while other families moved into the region and still other families merely refused to apply for homesteads.<sup>50</sup>

The mountain families that chose not to be resettled became a political liability for the Resettlement Administration. Newspapers made martyrs of them and the federal government became viewed as meddling and autocratic. The biggest problem the New Deal community building program faced was that it could be viewed as establishing communistic communities with its use of cooperative farms and factories. Virginia Senator Harry Flood Byrd, a major supporter of the creation of Shenandoah National Park fought the Shenandoah Homesteads as smacking of communism and was grossly inefficient. The early homes were exceedingly overpriced. Byrd objected to a cooperative dairy farm at the Greene County community, which was never implemented.<sup>51</sup>

Despite these ongoing problems for the Shenandoah Homesteads, including the 1937 change in the program administration to the Farm Security

---

<sup>49</sup> Darwin Lambert, "Administrative History of Shenandoah National Park: 1924-1976," (Unpublished manuscript, National Park Service, Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, 1979), p. 231.

<sup>50</sup> Lambert, Undying Past, pp. 249-52; and Simmons, "Shenandoah," pp. 156-58.

<sup>51</sup> Conkin, Tomorrow a New World, pp. 163-64.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 24

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

Administration, the homestead communities at Ida Valley, Wolftown, Madison, Washington, Flint Hill, near Elkton, and near Standardsville were ready for occupancy in the fall of 1937. In all, 172 families were resettled, with another 71 applicant families awaiting resettlement by 1938. The Farm Security Administration settled six of these 71 families with relatives, 24 as homesteaders, and the balance were settled in other ways.<sup>52</sup>

As of April 1940, 19 families totaling 78 persons, still lived in the Park. It was clear that of these 78 persons, only those persons on Secretary Ickes "secret list" could remain in the Park, and upon their death the remaining family members had to move out of the Park. By 1945, nine families remained. This number continued to decline and the last resident died in 1979, at the age of 92.<sup>53</sup>

The removal and the resettlement of the Blue Ridge inhabitants remains controversial. A certain amount of latent resentment remains today over the resettlement. Was it a success or a failure? Historians are still deciding the answer to this question. Clearly, though, the relocation of these mountain families during the establishment of Shenandoah National Park and the construction of the Skyline Drive, is closely tied to the community building program of the New Deal era.

### **Politics and Government**

Skyline Drive is significant under Criterion A for politics and government. Skyline Drive was constructed as a depression era make-work project, first as funded through federal drought relief appropriations and later funded by the Public Works Administration. It is closely associated with the New Deal public works programs.

The Skyline Drive was a depression era make-work project that used unemployed Virginians in its construction. Funding of the Drive's

---

<sup>52</sup> Lambert, Undying Past, pp. 252-53.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, pp. 254-55.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 25

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

construction began inauspiciously. In fall of 1930 William Carson secured a \$200,000 Department of the Interior appropriation to build a twenty-mile road connecting Camp Rapidan and Panorama, but in December this funding was rescinded. The severe 1930 drought ravaged the Blue Ridge region, leading to the failure of crops and the apple harvest. In January 1931, the National Park Service obtained Federal Drought Relief Administration appropriations to employ both Virginia farmers and itinerant apple pickers in the construction of the Drive. Additional funds were secured through Michigan Congressman Louis Crampton's legislation allowing the funding of road and trail construction in National Parks with drought relief money. These funding sources enabled the completion of the Central District. Of interest is the fact that almost two-thirds of the 161 construction workers who helped with the initial surveying and flagging of the roadbed were local men. The twenty-five cents an hour they earned helped offset the loss of livelihood caused by drought, government relocation and the onset of the Depression.<sup>54</sup>

With the inauguration of President Roosevelt in 1933, so began the New Deal. Roosevelt's New Deal was a loose series of laws and executive orders, focusing on relief and long-term reform, much of which he created during his first "Hundred Days" in office.<sup>55</sup> At the heart of the New Deal was creation of jobs, not merely putting the unemployed on the dole. New jobs helped jump start the economy, by infusing cash back into the economy. During the New Deal era, the federal government became the employer of millions of men and women in make-work projects. One of Roosevelt's earliest pieces of legislation was the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA). On May 26, 1933, Congress enacted the NIRA, which earmarked \$3.3 billion for public works projects. Title II Public Works and Construction Projects, which included construction of Skyline Drive, provided that the Administrator should prepare "a comprehensive program of public works, which shall include among other things the following: construction, repair, and improvement of public highways and parkways, etc."<sup>56</sup>

The first allocation of Public Works Funds made to the National Park Service

---

<sup>54</sup> Reeder, Shenandoah Secrets, p. 30.

<sup>55</sup> R. Jackson Wilson, et al., The Pursuit of Liberty: A History of the American People, vol. 2  
lmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1990), pp. 905-907.

<sup>56</sup> A.E. Demaray, "Federal Parkways," American Planning and Civic Annual (1936): 106.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 26

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

by Treasury Warrant (check) on August 4, 1933 was for approximately \$17 million. This money was provided for road and trail construction, building construction, installation of sanitary facilities, and for the control of insect and tree diseases in units of the National Park Service system.<sup>57</sup> The Public Works Administration (PWA) established in 1933, became responsible for the administering funding for these make-work projects. The PWA funded diverse projects like hugh flood control and hydroelectric dams employing thousands, to the construction of swimming pools and stadiums using only local labor.<sup>58</sup>

President Roosevelt named Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes administrator of the PWA. PWA money was allocated for a variety of non-federal and federal projects. The PWA funded projects based on national and existing planning. The NPS became a recipient of WPA funding which they used for capital improvements in the national park system. This became a period expansion for the NPS. In the West, PWA funds were used to construct new park buildings and develop new parks. In the East, the NPS used this funding to aid in the development of battlefield and reservation facilities. In Virginia, the PWA funded the construction of Skyline Drive and the Colonial and Blue Ridge Parkways.<sup>59</sup> PWA appropriations funded the construction of the Skyline Drive's North and South districts.<sup>60</sup>

Another of Roosevelt's first "Hundred Days" make-work legislation was the formation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). President Roosevelt signed the Federal Unemployment Relief Act on March 31, 1933 which authorized both the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) for conservation work on public lands and the creation of the CCC. On the first of April, President Roosevelt earmarked \$10 million of the \$3.3 billion of the NIRA to fund the ECW. Roosevelt formed the CCC to provide work for jobless men between the ages of 18 and 35, mainly in conservation. Projects, such as erosion control, reforestation, roadside clean

---

<sup>57</sup> A.E. Demaray, "Public Works in National Parks," American Planning Civic Annual (1934): 30-32

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 908.

<sup>59</sup> McClelland, Presenting Nature, pp. 196-97.

<sup>60</sup> "Contracts Awarded for Highways in Shenandoah National Park," Engineering-News Record 5 July 4, p. 25; and "Allotment Made for Continuing National Parkway," 10 October 1935, p. 520.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 27

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

up, fire prevention, detection and suppression, foot, horse and truck trail construction, the removal of dead and fallen timber, and the construction of small park buildings, were directed by Army officers with workers receiving \$30 a month, \$25 of which was to be sent home to their family. Much of the CCC's work was undertaken in the nation's national and state parks.<sup>61</sup> The CCC proved to be the work force required by the NPS to complete their six year master plans. More than two million men served in the CCC before it was disbanded in 1942.

The CCC was instrumental in the creation of Shenandoah National Park. Their work in the Park centered around restoring the landscape, removing dead chestnut trees, cutting fire roads, and trail construction and cultivating native vegetation for replanting elsewhere in the Park. In relation to the Skyline Drive, CCC enrollees aided in its construction by rounding slopes at cuts, planting cultivated and wild plantings along the Drive's right-of-way. Additionally, CCC enrollees aided in the development of campgrounds and picnic areas, the construction of comfort stations at waysides and in guardwall erection.

---

<sup>61</sup> McClelland, Presenting Nature, pp. 201-203.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 28

SKYLINE DRIVE  
Page County, VA

---

**National Historic Landmark Themes**

Theme XIV: Transportation

Subtheme G: Automobiles, Buses, Wagons, and Highways

Theme XVII: Landscape Architecture

Theme XXXII: Conservation of Natural Resources

Subtheme C: The Conservation Movement Matures, 1908-1941

10: The Great Depression and Conservation